

DUTY AND FAITH.

War-Sermons

(1) March 19, 1916 (2) April 2, 1916)

PREACHED IN

St. Margaret's Church, Westminster,
London,

BY

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Chaplain to Canadian Forces.

FOREWORD.

The two sermons herewith printed have special messages for this time of war and national distress. They were delivered in a church which in many ways possesses a national character. St. Margaret's, Westminster has had a long and glorious history. For centuries she has ministered in the very heart of the great city of London. And now for more than three hundred years she has been officially associated with the High Parliament of England. The time and place were of the utmost importance, even though the sermons may possess little merit. I should much like my many friends to accept them as a token of my affectionate appreciation of their multiplied acts of kindness. During my service as a Chaplain to the Forces I have been the recipient of much good-will and generous hospitality. To all these dear friends in Canada, England, France, or wherever the fortunes of this War have called them, I send hearty Easter greetings. For them, and for our beloved Empire, I pray, that the Festival of the Resurrection may bring hope and comfort and peace.

A P. S.

London, Easter, 1916.

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THE SOLDIER'S DUTY.

Sermon preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, at a service for Oversea Forces, Sunday, March 19th, 1916, 4 p.m.

St. Luke, III, 14.

"And soldiers (on service) also asked him, saying,
And what must we do?
And he said unto them,
Do violence to no man, neither accuse any one wrongfully;
And be content with your wages."

This text recalls to our minds a most vivid picture. A national religious movement has been started among the Jews, and a meeting in its interests is being held on the banks of the Jordan river. The circumstances of the occasion are very unique. The preacher's gown is made of camel's hair, girdled about with a leathern strap. The congregation is composed of self-righteous Pharisees, sceptical Sadducees, thieving tax-collectors, arrogant soldiers, and other sorts of sinners. The sermon is a trumpet call to action, full of fiery indignation at existing evils, and particularly condemnatory of the appointed leaders of the Church: "Ye offsprings of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Repent ye also, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But the most unique thing of all is the effect produced by the sermon; it is so utterly unlike anything in our modern day. Instead of the congregation moving away after the service, some in stolid indifference, some to chatter about commonplaces, a few to criticize, and a few to condemn, the whole multitude remains to interview the Preacher. They crowd up to him in groups, and earnestly ask what they are to do. They had been stirred to the

very depths of their souls, and now they are eager to translate their zeal into definite action. "Tell us what to do!" they cry. "We are with you in this matter, but it is all so new to us that we know not where to begin. Give us a lead and we will follow you to the end." At the tail of the procession come the soldiers, who are on active service, and they repeat the question so often asked that day, "And we, what must we do?"

Now it is interesting to study the answers given to this question. With wonderful discrimination the Preacher varies his reply to fit the need of the questioner. We are only concerned to-day with the advice given to the soldiers, but before we consider it let us pause a moment, and dwell upon the significance of the question. For in all life's relations there is nothing more important than duty. It is the biggest word in the language, with capacity to lift the soul to the topmost heights of noble action and self-sacrifice. And for the soldier, the word "Duty" has a compelling sound, full of stirring music and passionate appeal. It is an harmonious combination of all the bugle calls in the Army, summoning men to the hardest task and filling them with flaming energy for King and Country.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE SOLDIER.

Whatever opinions we may hold about profession of arms in the time of peace, it is unmistakeably clear that in the time of war the soldier is the supreme citizen. And that fact makes his duty superlatively important. It is in him that we place our dearest hopes. The destiny of the nation lies in his hands. He is making future history for us, as well as guarding the priceless heritage of the past. His acts become the possession of the Nation. He stands at the very centre of our imperial interests. All things must minister to his needs. The residue of the Nation must hold itself in continual readiness to wait upon him. Every other profession must yield ground and be content to occupy a subordinate position. He must be relieved of all business and domestic anxieties in order that his whole thought and strength may be centred upon his immediate duty. It is a solemn hour for him and

for us. If he fails, then the Nation goes down with him. If he succeeds, then are our hopes made certain, and the future becomes rosy with promise. See you not, my brothers, to what high destiny you are called, and how impressively solemn your responsibility is? Little wonder, then, that men under such critical circumstances should cry out, "And we, what must we do?" For our soldiers to-day stand in exactly the same position as these men who interrogated S. John regarding their duty. The enterprise upon which they were about to embark was absolutely new to them. They were the merest novices in the business of religion. They stood singularly in need of leadership and instruction. And how stands the matter with us? Of the men under arms to-day, how many knew anything about soldiering before the outbreak of this War? Such a thought as Military Service never entered our minds. We were busy on the farm, in the office, or the university—we were following the peaceful occupation of assisting in the building of new nations beyond the seas. Suddenly the call came, and we found ourselves in the thick of a tremendous conflict, without the least experience as to procedure. Does not all this render the question of duty imperatively necessary?

Upon the soldier's clear conception of his duty everything depends.

A full programme is, of course, impossible just now, but I seem to find in this counsel of S. John's some of the essentials. We have set out here the three temptations which are common to all military service. And as every negative implies a positive, we have also suggested to us a threefold obligation.

(1) THE TEMPTATION TO VIOLENCE.

"Do violence to no man." This is not an injunction against the profession of arms, though many "conscientious objectors" may flee to it for cover. It is a very strong protest against all forms of revenge and all unclean and dishonest warfare. The brutal assaults upon defenceless persons, the savage blood-lust which wreaks vengeance upon the innocent, the publication of false stories and the exaggeration of truth, the unnecessary

violence even to an enemy—these are the things against which the Preacher cautioned the soldiers. And is the caution unnecessary now? When men are keyed up by the call of battle, it is fatally easy to over-step the bounds of legitimate warfare and indulge in the violence which shames a nation. The soldier must never forget that his act belongs to the whole people. He is no isolated unit, free to do as his will dictates. If he commits a foul deed, the shame belongs to the country he serves—he brings dishonour upon the flag. I recall the strange motto of an old regiment: "A clean sword and a dirty Bible." The meaning is, that by constant use the Bible would become dog-eared, thumb-marked, and stained, but the sword would always be used in such honourable fighting that no stain of foulness would ever defile its blade. I commend the motto to you, my comrades. Violence is a sign of weakness, a confession that the cause is so poor that contemptible methods must be used to win. There is no more perilous maxim than the old adage, "All is fair in love and war." Both the lover and the warrior should scorn to stoop to foul methods, for it is no real victory which is thus won. You remember how, as boys at school or students in college, we would have scorned a fighter who struck a foul blow. And in this terrific conflict we must keep our swords clean. Whenever I hear or read the suggestion that we ought to fight our enemy with his own weapons, a text from the prophecy of Isaiah keeps ringing in my ears: "My sword shall be bathed in heaven." It is surely a call to honourable warfare. If our cause is just, we must not seek to support it by unjust methods. It is one of the common weaknesses of our humanity that we conceive high and noble purposes, and then undertake to achieve them by low and mean methods. Men are forever endeavouring to climb to heights of gold upon steps of straw. To try and reach a holy end by unholy means is as though a man should commit sacrilege in order to procure a cloth for the Lord's altar! We began this war upon such high grounds that the whole neutral world gave us of its sympathy. The sword was unsheathed in the interests of liberty, freedom, justice, international equity. Ah! then we dare not wield it in an unclean way—we must keep it white

and shining. All violence is a pitiful exhibition of great power. It seems to be the mere explosion of an unreasoning anger at being thwarted in its purpose, just as the serpent hisses in futile rage when it discovers the glass walls of its cage. It is impossible that such shameless warfare should result in victory. Defeat were better than dishonour. So we will take our stand with the knights of King Arthur and fight like gentlemen. The clean warrior is ever the hardest fighter. Did not Sir Galahad declare:

"My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure."

Just because we are at war with a power which stoops to violence and shame we are the more determined to fight honourably until the world is freed from all menace of a tyranny that would make slaves of us all. There can be no compromise or truce with so dishonourable a nation. Therefore, with hearts freed from hatred and vengeance, with hands undefiled by violence, with lips clean of bearing false witness, we will fight on until our purpose is accomplished. And when our children read the story of this War, they will do so with hearts unashamed because no dishonour stains its pages.

(2) THE TEMPTATION TO INJUSTICE.

"Accuse no one falsely." As the first injunction described the right attitude towards our enemy, let this case tell us of our duty towards our comrades-in-arms and the Empire which we serve. We all realize how intense feelings are under the strain of this war, and how very difficult it is sometimes to be patient with those who seem to be unmindful of their responsibility or who indifferently discharge their duties. In all great national crises there is temptation to harsh accusations. Leaders are maligned and condemned for their apparent failure to fully grasp the situation; parties formed in the State to agitate for various reforms or more efficient service, and all the while the air is thick with recriminations and innuendoes. Bitter charges are made, hostile prejudices are engendered and strengthened until the very atmosphere is electric with possible disaster. When the War

began we boasted of the solidarity of Empire. It silenced all factions and knit together the various elements as no other event could possibly have done. It presented such a united front to the enemy as to overthrow his cherished hopes and cause him intensest surprise and chagrin. But one wonders if we are not in some danger of losing this spirit of unity and mutual service. As a people we have an unfortunate habit of self-depreciation—we are a nation of grumblers. In an enterprise of such gigantic proportion as this war it would be miraculous if mistakes were not made. And when we recall that it found us in large measure unprepared, the wonder would seem to be that we have done so amazingly well. We are concerned just now with the moral effect of ungenerous criticisms and bitter debate. There is nothing so demoralising to the men at the Front as the wrangling at home. I know whereof I speak, and for that reason I make my plea that we cease from strife and contention. It is perhaps natural that here at home, where plans are made and schemes originated, there should be an element of disagreement, but let us try and believe that all are actuated by an intense desire to prosecute the war to a successful issue. Feelings are bound to run high, because the stake is so tremendous, but may we not have confidence in one another? When men are flinging themselves with noble abandon against the enemy in the Trenches, it does not help very much to learn that accusations of incompetence, cowardice, disloyalty, or sordid partizanship are being made at home. You have only to spend some time in the Firin~ Line where cheerfulness and unhindered unity are constant characteristics, and then return for a few weeks here, where harsh criticism and acrimonious charges are the daily portion, in order to realize what a numbing and paralysing effect these things have! The barest justice demands that the men at the Front shall be assured that the whole Empire is behind them in their heroic work, that we stand ready to yield our all in order to fortify and make effective their splendid service. No consideration of wealth or business or domestic anxiety must hinder us in this regard. We count all these but dross in order that we may win victory, and so establish righte-

ousness in the earth. It is because an experience of several months in Flanders has taught me how vitally necessary it is that our fighting forces must be strengthened and encouraged by an unselfish and whole-souled patriotism at home that I dare to make this plea to you who have it in your power to create here an atmosphere of imperial zeal in which petty partizanship and selfish interests cannot possibly live. It is impossible, of course, that we should cease altogether from agitation and debate, for that would mean stagnation and failure, but may we not hope for a calmer discussion and a more restrained deliberation? We are strengthening the hands of the enemy by this public exhibition of our heated rivalries—our foes eagerly grasp at our apparent disunion, and grossly exaggerate it. As a matter of fact, these things are more apparent than real. Down at bottom we are all loyal and true to the high purpose of Empire—it is only our folly and long habit of complaint that create the impression of harmful division. Let us guard against “evil speaking, lying, and slandering,” and make strict justice the basis of all our national undertakings.

(3) THE TEMPTATION TO DISCONTENT.

“Be content with your wages.” And here we have counsel regarding our work. A genuine contentment is a beautiful characteristic. It makes for efficient service and thorough work. There is no enemy like discontent—it eats into our strength and saps our vitality. The constant striving after place and power, the thirst for promotion, the straining of the eyes towards awards—these are the evils of a false ambition. It may be the struggle after temporary and material gain or the stretching out of hands towards higher position and influence. A mind that is only half centred upon its work yields but indifferent service. We are dissatisfied with our place and want to move off elsewhere. But opportunity is not yonder, it is here. It is not where you are but what you are that counts in any enterprise. We have heard of the man who travelled clear around the world in search of wealth, only to return empty-handed to his little farm, where a diamond mine had been discovered after his departure. We are here to serve, not to be served. If

advancement and honour are the motives of your service, then you have failed to understand your duty. If these prizes come in the faithful discharge of your duty, well and good, but do not make them the reason of your service. In any great undertaking there are of course places of varying importance. But the least duty may become great because it is linked to a great cause. The tiniest pin in the machinery may be as important as the driving wheel, for fitness is more than size. If you were made for bigger things, the best evidence of it will be in making the most of your present duties. The man is much more than the place, though a big place does not make a big man—it only makes a small man ridiculous. Let us strive to do our duty in that state of life to which we have been called, and not bemoan our inferior sphere.

“Honour and shame from no conditions rise,
Act well your part; there all the honour lies.”

The value of a work does not depend upon its conspicuous character, neither does it lack value because of obscurity. The only thing that makes work valuable is the personality, the character of the worker. Whether Private or General, you must go contentedly to your task and buy up its every opportunity for the fulfilment of your duty.

THE INSPIRATION OF RESPONSIBILITY.

Honour, Justice, Contentment—these are essential qualities in your duty. Is the task too great, my brothers? The responsibility too heavy? Then let us hasten to add that every responsibility carries embosomed within it the power of inspiration. For what is responsibility? Break the word in two and reverse the halves, then the meaning will be clear. Responsibility is ability to respond. There is power residing in your privilege; there is strength in the heart of your obligation. The response of the will to the call of obligation gives God opportunity for the increase of your capacity. By doing we are enabled to do. Each effort brings fresh strength and courage—it uncovers hidden power. And how shall I, in closing, inspire you to the fulfilment of your tremendous duty? The story is told of a regiment in the days when the colours were carried into the

fight. The colour-sergeant moved forward so quickly that he was far in advance of the men, when some one called to him, "You are marching too quickly. Bring the colours back to the men." But he immediately replied: "No, bring the men up to the colours." So let us bring the men of our wide dominions up to the standard of Empire by reminding them of their high privilege! Is there no inspiration for you in the call of Empire? Does it not fire you with zeal when you realize that all the noble traditions of the long British centuries are in your keeping to-day? For the Oversea Dominions must not hesitate to claim a full share in the obligations of Empire. We are not here as colonies to help the Motherland—we are full brothers with the citizens of the United Kingdom. We do not care to be patronized and thanked for our generosity in coming to help out in this war. The obligation was as binding upon us as upon the British Isles. One sometimes hears that the constitutional bond between the Oversea Dominions and the United Kingdom is a very slender one. I am not qualified to debate the matter, but I have heard of a wire so slender that a child's hand might have shattered it, and yet it was capable of carrying sufficient electric power to drive the machinery of a city. And we are equally sure that the tie between us and the United Kingdom is strong enough to bear the heaviest strain that can be put upon it, and is capable of bearing power enough to drive our common foe down into the dust. Our interest in this war is identical with that of Britain's—we are thrilled with the sense of our Imperial obligation. Is there no inspiration in the thought that we are assisting in the future making of civilization? For out of this world-struggle there must issue a new civilization—"a new Heavens and Earth." We are fighting the battle of humanity, for the principles at stake in this war are eternal, and touch all the shores of human interests. Righteousness, justice, liberty, truth—these all stand behind the material might which grapples with the foe on the fields of Europe and on the high seas.

Once again, is there no inspiration in the responsibility which we hold towards our fallen comrades? The blood of our brothers cries to us from the stricken fields

of Belgium, France, and Gallipoli. The sacrifices which they made must not be in vain—we will see to it that victory will be theirs. Or do we not feel the throb of power within us as we learn the noble struggle which our gallant Allies are making? Especially as the news comes to us of the granite wall of living men which France has raised against the fierce assault of the enemy. I know not what more to say to you, my comrades, in the way of inspiration. Let me in a final sentence lift the whole matter to the heights of God. For His Hand is in the conflict, shaping the destiny of the nations. We are firmly convinced that we are on His side in that we have espoused the cause of Right against Might. In the final analysis, this war will stand in history as a great struggle of principles, a higher internationalism against a one-power dominion, democracy against autocracy, the rule of the free spirit against the law of force, the sway of Christianity against the reign of Cæsar. Because our conviction is strong that we stand upon the side of freedom, justice, brotherhood, we shall pour out our souls in the last full measure of devotion, and then leave the issue in the Hands of God, confident that the Judge of all the earth will do right."

"Fear not: we will not fail,
The vision must prevail.
Truth is the oath of God,
And sure and fast,
Through Death and Hell,
Holds onward to the last."

THE ROCK AND THE PIT.

A MESSAGE OF COMFORT.

Sermon preached at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on Sunday, April 2nd, 1916, at 7 p.m.

Isaiah 51, i.

"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,
And to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."

In these days of trouble many people are rediscovering the Bible. They find it to be a Book of living reality. It bears directly upon the circumstances of our times. Shortly after the outbreak of the war there appeared in the University Magazine of Montreal an article of considerable length. It consisted solely of Scriptural passages which, in the judgment of the Editor, had a pertinency for the present situation. As one read them it was difficult to believe that they were written hundreds of years ago.

The Old Testament is especially valuable at this time. How wonderfully the Psalms express our needs and longings! And the prophecies deal with emergencies that are almost identical with the pressing circumstances of this war. Of course this appositeness of the Scriptures to our own day may be, and has been, pushed to absurd extremes; nevertheless we rejoice to know that the Bible is coming into its own and that people are recognizing that it is the inspired Word of God. The latter half of the prophecy of Isaiah is full of such glowing messages for our present guidance that it might have been written yesterday, and with particular reference to the war. Amid all the difficulties which are to be found there one thing is pre-eminently certain—the whole of it was intended as a message of comfort.

And how sorely the people needed comfort. Few have been the nations whose sufferings were as keen and constant as the people of Israel. The prophet yearns to console them in their dark hour. They had been persecuted and tortured by many enemies; they had been defeated in battle, and their city of Jerusalem razed to the ground. The glorious Temple, the very heart of the National life, had been demolished and left a smouldering pile. It is as though London had been sacked and the venerable Abbey left a heap of ruins! And then to add the final blow to all their misfortunes the people were carried away into captivity where, for nearly a century, they languished in bondage and misery.

At long last, however, they are given their freedom, and the little remnant turned their weary feet towards Home. But what an appalling scene of desolation and ruin confronted them! No holy city, no sacred temple, nothing of the former grandeur and glory! Their hearts sank within them as they looked into the barren and hopeless future. How shall they be comforted? What can be said to cheer and inspire them for the almost impossible task ahead of them?

THE APPEAL TO HISTORY.

So the prophet takes up his mighty task and sings his wonderful song of hope and faith. He makes a direct appeal to history—he recounts for them all the mighty works of God and the splendid way in which He had led the nation down the years. Out of the past he summons a power of faith which will lift them over all their difficulties. This God Who built up a nation from one man. Who drew them out of Egyptian bondage and divided the waters of the sea. Who watched above them through all the centuries, will not fail them now. He will restore the waste places and make the desert to blossom as a rose. Have they not had evidence in plenty of His power and goodness? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? As they look back over the long past, will not their faith be quickened until all obstacles shall melt away, and the new nation go forward unto greater glory? "Look unto the Rock whence ye

are hewn, and to the hole of the Pit whence ye are digged."

It is a very striking figure, occurring only in this passage. The need was so great that it required unique encouragement. The picture is that of a quarry whence huge blocks of granite were hewn, and carried away to be built into a glorious structure. And these Israelites must remember their ancestry and never forget that they are stones cut out of the magnificent quarry of the past.

THE ROCK AND THE PIT.

It may be that the figure is simply that, but I am inclined to think that we have here a double metaphor. Everywhere in Scripture the Rock is the symbol of high and divine things. It bears with it the idea of strength, durability, immoveableness, unchangeableness. "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I," "A great rock in a weary land." "That rock was Christ."

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

On the other hand, the Pit is everywhere associated with dark and sinister meanings. It suggests bondage, misery, degradation, helplessness. "They that go down into the pit," "The horrible pit and miry clay," "That he should not die in the pit."

Here, then, we have a double message of comfort. They are to look with eyes of faith and confidence to the mighty Rock whence they were hewn; and with eyes of thankfulness to the dreadful Pit from which they had been delivered. Both figures, however, have reference to the past—the prophet's appeal is to history.

THE MESSAGE FOR US.

Let us now leave the case of the Israelites and come to our own times. This is a day of much doubt and misgiving. The war has filled many hearts with fear and foreboding. The tide of faith runs low in many quarters—in some places it has dried up. Souls are upon the rack, hearts are sore and troubled. Minds are filled with doubt. We have been ruthlessly torn out of our

ease and self-complacency and faced with the greatest tragedy of the years. Men are confused—they know not what to think. Old ideas, cherished convictions have been broken and shattered. The cataclysm of this war has uprooted faith for some, whilst others are clinging with desperate hands to the old creed. What can the pulpit say in this dark hour? Is there any special message that the Preacher has for the people? It would seem imperative that some strong assurance must be given. We dare not talk about ordinary things when souls are struggling and panting in the gloom of this war.

The text seems to strike the needed note. It makes the worthiest appeal that can possibly be made at this time. For the appeal to history is the appeal to Faith in God. Christianity is a religion of facts, and we must therefore appeal to history. What is history but the account of God's dealings with humanity? He is the vital principle of the world, the basis and background of all life. His presence walks through all the centuries and binds them into a solid unit. But it seems so difficult for us to look upon history as a whole. We single out certain periods and keep them separate, whereas their chief value lies in their relation to one another. It is only as we come to recognize that all ages are bound together by a living principle that we shall learn the lesson of history. Let me try and set it forth in an illustration. In Canada we can take a continuous railway journey for four thousand miles. Leaving the far side of the Dominion we traverse across several provinces. Each contributes of its people and wealth, until the train reaches the Atlantic seaboard, laden with its precious freight. The passenger who travels the whole distance does not think of the provinces as isolated and independent—the railway binds them all together. He knows more and more of the country as he travels Eastward, and when he reaches the sea his knowledge has accumulated, and he thinks of Canada as one nation. Even so, humanity has travelled down the centuries, gathering out of each some treasure of faith and experience, the whole bound to-

gether by the Divine Presence, faith becoming stronger and stronger as the years roll by. The man who has fought many battles will surely not tremble as a new enemy approaches him. Out of his past struggles and victories he will have won a larger faith. The person who has passed through several sicknesses and learns that God has delivered him out of them all will surely not grow faint with fear when a fresh disease draws near. That is what the appeal to history means. Experience ought to increase faith and strengthen us for the next encounter. It seems a sorry comment upon our belief that we should grow weak as each new trial falls upon us. If you have had a noble friend who has stood faithfully by you in many difficulties, will it not be a poor trust in him if you tremble as the next trouble lays its hand upon you? Surely the child will walk serenely out into the future where temptation exists because it has learned by a blessed experience to trust its mother. The Nation or church or individual life, with multiplied experiences behind it, ought to walk bravely on towards the coming disaster, confident that the God of yesterday is the God of to-day, and the God of to-morrow.

COMFORT FOR THE NATION.

Let me first of all take this text and apply it to our national life. There are strains of pessimism abroad just now. If we were to heed these, one would be obliged to think that we had no past. God is on trial at each new emergency. These poor souls have gathered no faith out of the past. "Does this mean the break up of the Empire? Has Britain reached the climax of her history and will soon now go the way of all Empires?" There are not many bold enough to tell forth the disturbance of their mind, but there can be little doubt that many hearts are quaking with fear. To all of these one can but ring out the call of the text. "Lock unto the Rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the Pit whence ye are digged." God has carved us out of a splendid past—a past that glows and throbs with noble deeds and heroic action. The older a nation the braver it ought to be—all the splendid years ought to add to its faith. Can we think of the great souls in British his-

tory and still whine about our present trial? "Look unto the Rock!" Have the days of King Alfred the Great, of William the Conqueror, of Queen Elizabeth, no inspiration for us? Can we not trust the God who raised up a Drake and Nelson, a Pitt and Beaconsfield, a Wellington and Gordon? Out of such granite as this were we hewn! "Look unto the Pit." As we recall the deliverance from Armada and Napoleon, will our hearts grow pale at the mention of a Kaiser? Was there ever a people with more cause for a faith superior to any disasters than this Empire of ours? What wonders God hath wrought! Just to take one instance. During the fiercest period of the Napoleonic Wars God raised up the men who fashioned the nineteenth century. Between 1800 and 1815, when the fields of Europe were drenched with blood, and England was in dire danger, such men as Disraeli, Gladstone, Cobden, Bright, Shaftesbury, Tennyson, and Browning, were given to our land. We were delivered out of the Pit and these noble stones were hewn out of the quarry by the Hand of God and set in the Temple of our national life. It may be (and God grant it!) that out of all the agony and struggle of this war leaders will be raised up to fashion anew our Imperial life. God knows how deeply we had sunk into the Pit of ease and selfishness! We were slipping down into degradation and corruption. If this war served no other purpose than that of shaking us out of our luxury and materialism, it will have been immensely useful. But is it not shameful that with all these stores of God's mercy behind us we should be weak and faithless? Do we not need the confidence of David—"The God Who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the bear will also deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine?"

"God of our Fathers known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle line,
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold,
Dominion over palm and pine;
Lord God of hosts be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget."

COMFORT FOR THE CHURCH.

One would naturally suppose that Christians at least would preserve their faith under a great crisis! But strange to say the pessimism is greatest here. "Is Christianity a failure? Can there be a God to allow such atrocities? Has not the Church signally failed to impress itself upon the nations? Can we dare talk of missions after this?" These are some of the things that one is continually hearing from professing Christians. We are no better than the old Israelites. You remember how they complained as each new trial confronted them? "He smote the stony rock and the waters gushed forth. But can He give bread also or provide flesh for His people?" The past mercy was no guarantee to them that God would provide in the new emergency. And has not that been the constant attitude of Church members? The past is only a beautiful memory instead of a fountain of faith. They have drawn no power out of the long centuries of Church history. They believe firmly that God freed the Church at the time of the Reformation, but He evidently exhausted Himself, for to these trembling souls He has no power for the present difficulty. These seem to be new problems to which His Hand is unaccustomed! But that is just what they are not! There is not a single new religious problem raised by the war! All these perplexities were here before the war started—all that the war has done has been to emphasize them, to make them more clear to our minds. But supposing they were absolutely new, should that fact paralyze our faith in God? It is nothing less than sinful that Church people should be so stupidly unbelieving. Is God only the God of the dead centuries? "Look unto the Rock!" Where is the God of Wycliffe, Cranmer, Wesley, Butler, Julian of Norwich, William Law? Behold the army of martyrs! All this high precedent of goodness and sainthood is for you, to make stout your heart and firm your faith! If we belong to a Church which reaches clear back across all the British centuries, what is the good of our long pedigree if it does not bear to us a calm confidence in the Christ Who is the Head of the Church? One might understand

weakness of faith in a Christian Society born but yesterday because it has had so little experience of God's love and mercy. But a Church whose roots reach back into the nation for 1,500 years, ought to bear rich harvest of faith. "Look unto the Pit!" Can not the God who delivered us from the ecclesiastical bondage of the 16th century, the worldliness of the 18th century, the materialism of the 19th century, also deliver us from the militarism of the 20th century? He has promised that the gates of Hell shall not prevail—has He not given abundant proof of its truth in the past? Have we not good reason to believe that God must triumph, that judgment is surely set for the nation which practices evil, even though the wheels of His chariot seem to tarry? Let us climb the Hill of Calvary and in the hushed awe of that scene where all seemed failure learn the lesson that God is nearest us in the darkest hour. Out of all the pain and struggle He is leading us into richer light.

INSPIRATION FOR THE INDIVIDUAL.

In the few moments that remain, let me bring this matter close to your religious life. For after all **you** are the nation, **you** are the Church. The individual is incorporated into the society, and the strength of faith in the organization is exactly proportionate to the faith in the personal life. We shall issue out of this struggle free and strong as a nation or a Church, according to the measures of the consecration of our individual lives. So that the matter is personal, my friends. And therefore I make my appeal to the history of your personal life. You have had experience of various kinds in the past—have they taught you nothing of God and His abiding Presence? Have you just taken His gifts and thought nothing of the Giver? Is it mere gratitude which moves you now? Or are you not gaining increase of faith as the days slip by? Have you reached by a blessed experience the calm, sure confidence of the Psalmist, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him?" When once we have learned that the character of God is goodness, mercy, truth, we are not shaken or unsettled by any hard circumstances which for the present baffle our un-

derstanding. We are God's children, and though He calls us to endure things which outrun our comprehension, yet we lovingly trust Him just because He is our Father.

It is a popular theory to be lenient with poor, erring humanity, because after all there is much of the "Pit" in our nature. We derive part of our nature at least from the same source as the serpent and the animal, and therefore these fleshly appetites and passions are of the "earth earthy," and we must not be too hard upon sinners! "To know all is to forgive all." One would suppose from this theory that sin belonged to our humanity, though the Incarnation teaches a different story. No, the poet is right, "trailing clouds of glory do we come, from God Who is our Home." "He hath pulled me out of the pit and miry clay and set my feet upon a rock." I point you to your divine origin. You are sons of God, the heirs of all the ages. "Look unto the Rock whence ye are hewn." Be worthy of your high lineage. It is surely a worthy appeal to remind a son of his noble connections. He will keep clean the unstained escutcheon, he will pass on unimpaired the rich heritage. He knows that he is but a link in the chain which stretches across the years, so he will bear his part nobly and well, and thus make strong the unity of the nation or Church of which he is a part. And we, too, will stand in our places to-day, unshaken by the storm which beats about our life, true to duty, strong in faith, holding fast to the Faith of our Fathers.

"Faith of our fathers! living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy,
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers! holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death."



